Statement

(a) and (b) Development of horticulture sector was one of the thrust areas during the VIII Plan Period. Considering perishable nature of the horticulture produce, development of infrastructure for post-harvest handling of the produce was, therefore, taken up as a major programme during the Plan Period. The National Horticulture Board (NHB), an organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture provided assistance during the period, for creation of post-harvest infrastructure facilities such as grading and packing centres, precooling units, specialised transport facilities, cold storages and for creation of marketing infrastructure for horticulture produce. These schemes are being continued during the current financial year. The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), another organisation under the Agriculture Ministry, has also been implementing a number of schemes for providing financial assistance for post-harvest operations to cooperatives of fruits and vegetable growers etc. through State Governments for creation of infrastructure facilities for storage, transportation, marketing, processing etc. The Ministry of Food Processing Industry is implementing a scheme for providing assistance for setting up of pre-cooling and post-harvest handling facilities during 8th Plan period from 1994-95 onwards.

(c) The estimated production of major horticulture crops in the country put together during the year 1994-95 was over 1175 lakh MTs from an area of about 131 lakh hectares in comparison to an estimated production of 958 lakh MTs from an area of 125 lakh hectares during 1991-92.

[Translation]

DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, in reply to my question the hon. Minister has mentioned about the schemes launched and facilities provided, for marketing, processing and storage of potato and fruits. A record was set in the production of potato and fruits last year but the storage facility could not be provided therefor. Thousands of acres of unutilised barren land is there in the country. I would like to know whether the Government propose to utilise that land by starting horticulture on it.

[English]

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : Sir, the Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Forest Conservation Programme

*282. SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA :
SHRI MAHESH KUMAR M. KANODIA :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that there has been continuous increase in pollution in the country;

(b) if so, whether the Government have formulated any scheme to speed up the forest conservation programme in view of increasing pollution;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the time by which the said scheme is likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ) : (a) Yes, Sir, Pollution has increased in the country, mainly due to growing industrial and transportation activities, generation of solid waste and sewage loads.

(b) to (d) There are a number of schemes augmenting afforestation and forest conservation which contribute to abatement of pollution. These schemes include afforestation measures mainly by State Governments under their programmes as well as schemes under various other development programmes including that of the National Afforestation and Eco-Development Board. Also, while according environmental clearance to developmental projects, it is stipulated that a green belt be raised on the site. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 provides for compensatory afforestation in case of diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes.

[English]

Fish Diseases

*286. DR. ASIM BALA : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) fish diseases prevalent in the country;

(b) the steps taken to prevent these diseases;

(c) whether the Government are planning to set up research centre for the fish diseases in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) and (b) The diseases presently prevalent in fin and shell fish in the country largely relate to bacterial and fungal diseases, parasitic